



"The Car without a Single Weakness": Early Automobile Advertising

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Cover Design

"THE CAR WITHOUT A SINGLE WEAKNESS": EARLY AUTOMOBILE ADVERTISING

P A M E L A W A L K E R L A I R D

And speaking about hills, I want to tell you that the best part of automobiling—that part that gets you harder than anything else—is the way an automobile sweeps uphill. It doesn't know a hill when it comes to it. A wheelbarrow can run down-hill. . . . The automobile, however, going down-hill can make old gravitation dizzy, drunk, even with delight; and then with equal ease it will shoot up-hill in a way to make gravitation tear its hair with frenzy and slink away crest-fallen, conquered. [Editorial, *Judicious Advertising*, 1903]

So exclaimed Frank Munsey, publisher extraordinaire, concluding with the assertion that automobiling “will renew the life and youth of the overworked man or woman.” “This,” the editors confirmed, “is good sound talk—*truthful talk*—and it offers a suggestion for strong convincing advertising argument for automobiling and for any automobile that *goes*.” But in contrast to this “sound talk,” most automobile advertisements had at the time “a certain sameness” that belied the promotional potential perceived by enthusiasts such as Munsey. Too many automobile manufacturers had failed to keep up with progress in advertising, and “still cling to the old-time idea that the proper sort of an ad shows a [wood]cut of the machine, with a few stock phrases” and a list of agents. “Let the makers catch up the spirit of enthusiasm—[and] stand out for work of the highest quality from those who prepare their announcements. The results will well repay the pains.”¹

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¹“The Automobile Industry and Its Advertising Possibilities,” *Judicious Advertising* 1, no. 7 (May 1903): 15–17.

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For all the differences among early automakers and their products, they entered this new industry because they shared Munsey's passion for the machines, and for the experiences of automobiling.² Why did their advertisements not reflect that enthusiasm? Why did the cars in them not move? Where was the verve that bicycle advertisements had shown since the 1880s, and the slogans—like “Columbia Riders Know Naught but Pleasure”?³

Early auto builders had something to prove through their public statements, very much like their 19th-century counterparts in other new manufacturing industries, who often used advertisements displaying factories, locomotives, and other symbols of industrial progress to make their case for inclusion in the pantheon of heroes of capitalism.⁴ But apparently automakers did not feel the need to prove that automobility was exciting. All auto ads before 1920, and most before 1930, featured technical discussions appropriate to a new and expensive, exciting but intimidating technology, akin to personal computer advertisements today. Lengthy copy gave potential owners information calculated to inspire confidence in the machines. It also taught a language for asking questions and exchanging observations that relieved people's uncertainties about the mysteries under the hood, as in the Dorris Motor Car Company's discussions of “power plant,” “choker manipulation,” and “vaporization of present day low grade gasoline” (fig. 1).

Many advertising messages therefore presented cars as machines with parts and prices to be proud of—like the Dorris pictured quietly above a diagram of a “distillator.” This approach suited a complex machine that, for all its thrill, operated with noises, smells, and difficulties yet unmediated by further technological refinement or cultural familiarity. For all its swell language, the 1922 Dorris headline, “The Car Without A Single Weakness,” expressed characteristic hesitations and concerns, as did the strange boast that the Dorris possessed “wholesome beauty without a trace of freakishness.” Despite “sixteen years' experience in designing and building high-grade cars,” this firm was still part of a young industry.

Beyond this near-universal mechanical theme, a second theme dominated many early automobile advertisements, namely the now

²Donald Finlay Davis, *Conspicuous Production: Automobiles and Elites in Detroit, 1899–1933* (Philadelphia, 1988), esp. pp. 1–3, 20–25.

³Pope Manufacturing Company Christmas poster, 1895; Bicycles, Box 2, Collection of Business Americana, Archive Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

⁴Pamela Walker Lurito, “Advertising's Smoky Past: Themes of Progress in Nineteenth-Century Advertisements,” in *The Popular Perception of Industrial History*, ed. Robert Weible and Francis R. Walsh (Lanham, Md., 1989), pp. 175–212.

APRIL 1922 69

BUILT UP TO A STANDARD, NOT DOWN TO A PRICE



The Dorris
"Built Up to a Standard
Not Down to a Price"

The Car Without A Single Weakness

Some cars are noted for their beauty; some for their peculiar type of engine; still others for some other single feature.

Probably in no other car than The Dorris do you find *combined* all the desirable qualities which you have a right to demand of a high-grade motor car.

- Wholesome beauty without a trace of freakishness.
- Incomparable finish inside and out—the hidden as well as the visible.
- Riding qualities that make roads seem made of silken velvet.

—A power plant that can be depended upon at all times and under all conditions to pick up instantly from a snail's pace to almost any speed desired—and to endure beyond your fondest hopes.

Sixteen years' experience in designing and building high-grade cars has accomplished all this for Dorris owners. Their appreciation is evidenced by the glowing terms in which they express their satisfaction.

When investigating the field of high-grade motor cars, don't overlook The Dorris.

DORRIS MOTOR CAR CO., ST. LOUIS
The Dorris Has Led in Automobile Engineering Since 1905

DORRIS MOTOR CAR CO.
Dept. M, St. Louis, Mo.
Gentlemen: Please advise if the Dorris Franchise is available for this territory. Also send details of your proposition to dealers. This does not obligate me in any way.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

THE DORRIS DISTILLATOR

This is one of the many reasons for the perfect operation of the Dorris Power Plant. The Dorris Distillator is an exclusive feature which assures the vaporization of present day low grade gasoline.

With the Distillator there is a noticeable lack of choker combustion, a quick getaway and smooth operation, even when the engine is cold, that is most gratifying.



BUILT UP TO A STANDARD, NOT DOWN TO A PRICE

FIG. 1.—“The Car Without A Single Weakness,” The Dorris Motor Car Co., *Motor* 37, no. 5 (April 1922): 69.

time-honored practice of associating a make with prestige. This was particularly congenial to the ambitions of those manufacturers who sought both to legitimate their entrepreneurial activities with their own high status and to improve that status with financial success.⁵ In 1912, Oldsmobile pictured “‘Autocrats’ of the Road” in an un-

⁵Davis, *passim*.



Oldsmobile
14th Year

“Autocrats” of the Road

There's as much solid comfort in the two-passenger Touring Roadster and four-passenger Tourabout as there is in our seven-passenger cars.

<p>The contour of seats and cushions; the depth and quality of upholstery; the room allowed for legs and elbows; the protection from dust;</p>	<p>the arrangements for ventilation; the wheel-base and drop frame; the large wheels and tires; the springs and shock-absorbers;—</p>
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plus the long stroke, smooth running engine,—all produce Comfort in superlative degree.

Formerly one expected luxury and room in limousine and touring cars—but a certain amount of dust and cramped quarters in a roadster. Oldsmobile designers, however, studied the possibilities of these smaller types for a long time and each year an advance was made—evidencing in the Autocrat model shown above—literally the “last word” in cross-country luxury!

Exclusive features worth noting are the last screened wind-scoop and “sky-light” in the hooded dash; patent Oldsmobile ventilators in fore doors; enclosed, bell-type side lights (wired to battery), and the convenient luggage and spare tire arrangements.

<p>TOURABOUT, \$3800 Engine and Chassis the same as for Autocrat Touring and Limousine bodies. <i>The Oldsmobile catalogue is a handsome book, showing all types and styles of Oldsmobiles. It will be sent gratis, on request.</i></p>	<p>TOURING ROADSTER, \$3500 Equipment absolutely complete and of the highest possible quality.</p>
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OLDS MOTOR WORKS, LANSING, MICHIGAN

Branches in the Principal Cities Dealers in every section from Coast to Coast
Copyright, 1912, Olds Motor Works

FIG. 2.—“‘Autocrats’ of the Road,” Olds Motor Works, *Life* 59, no. 1535 (March 28, 1912): cover 4.

usually lively advertisement, with copy reminding readers of the problems of roadsters and listing features of the new Oldsmobiles, including “the long stroke, smooth running engine,” shock absorbers, and “protection from dust” (fig. 2).

The only makes that consistently avoided mechanical discourse were Packard and Pierce-Arrow, at the top of the price range. They focused instead on the elite character—or aspirations—of their mar-

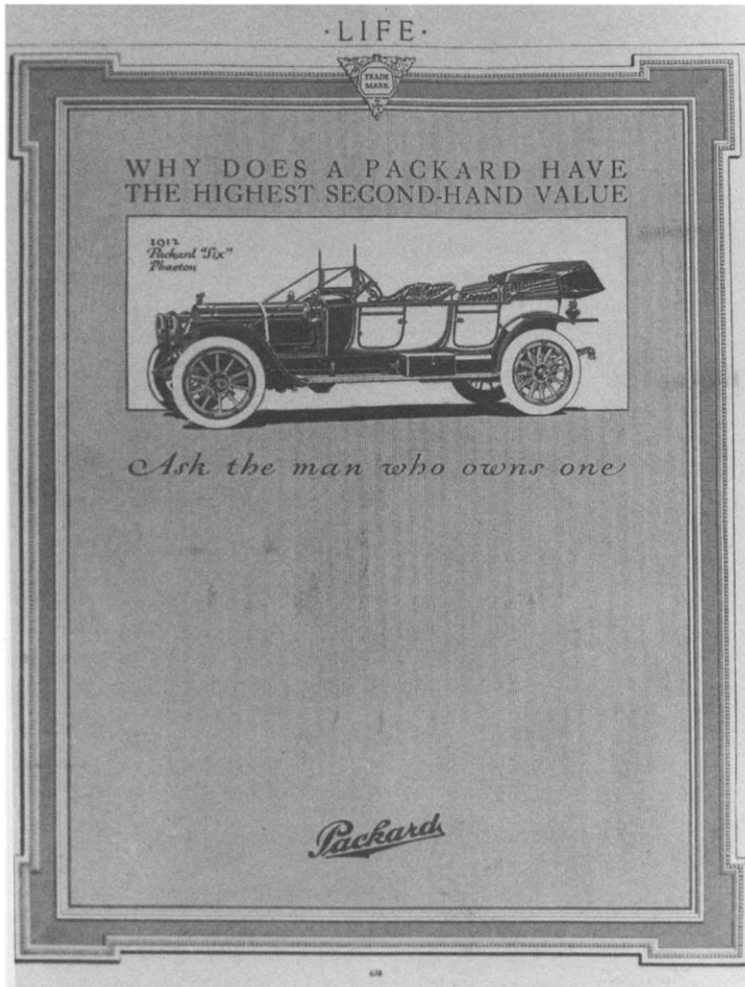


FIG. 3.—“Why Does A Packard Have The Highest Second-Hand Value?” Packard, *Life* 59, no. 1535 (March 28, 1912): 624. One of a series of Packard question-and-answer ads that featured the slogan, “Ask the man who owns one”: a statement of confidence in their customers’ satisfaction—and possibly also a subtle appeal to the reader’s desire to be the kind of man “who owns one.”

ket. By the 1910s, their advertisements featured elegant architectural borders with static drawings of their cars; Packard ads (fig. 3) never even pictured people during this period, whereas Pierce-Arrow often included richly dressed bystanders. As a leading copywriter, Earnest Elmo Calkins, observed, “mechanical excellence would be approached ultimately by all cars.” Then “people would demand fin-

ish, beauty and luxury,” and “the car which had a reputation for those things” would have a stronger place in the market. Both Packard and Pierce-Arrow employed artists early on to create “atmosphere” through advertisements that were “distinct in style.”⁶ This suited a “gentleman’s car, built by gentlemen” more concerned with their reputations than their fortunes.⁷ Such messages, with their elegant if static imagery, expressed the prestige attending ownership, but not the excitement.

Two decades after Munsey’s exclamations, Sinclair Lewis depicted George F. Babbitt as feeling that his motor car was “poetry and tragedy, love and heroism.”⁸ Yet auto advertisements continued as before. Auto manufacturers still operated in exception to practices by then standard in advertising brand-name consumer goods in national media. They still told their audiences what they wanted known, instead of attempting either to discern or to shape what consumers wanted in a car and formulating their messages accordingly. In this they followed earlier patterns common to almost all businesses when advertisements resulted from direct contact between an advertiser—that is, the person paying for an advertisement—and a communications producer—for example, a printer, sign maker, or publisher. By 1910, however, advertising agents or specialist employees placed most newspaper and magazine advertisements for nationally marketed, brand-name consumer goods, and they exercised increasing inputs to the messages. But, like earlier advertisers, the owners and CEOs of early automotive firms still either wrote their own messages or closely supervised them, ignoring division of labor protocols, even when specialists assisted with and placed the ads.⁹ So auto ads through the 1920s reflected owners’ ambitions and concerns to a degree not true for other manufacturers then advertising directly to consumers.¹⁰ And auto manufacturers as a group embraced advertising eagerly, spending lavish sums for it; they took out full-page ads in costly magazines in the early years of the century, when most advertisers still considered the practice an extravagance.¹¹

⁶Earnest Elmo Calkins, *The Business of Advertising* (New York, 1915), pp. 205–7.

⁷Davis, pp. 59–60.

⁸Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (1922; reprint, New York, 1991), p. 23.

⁹Davis (n. 2 above), pp. 6–7.

¹⁰This was unlike the practices of batch and custom producers who marketed through retailers without substantial consumer advertising. Philip Scranton, “Manufacturing Diversity: Production Systems, Markets, and an American Consumer Society, 1870–1930,” *Technology and Culture* 35 (July 1994): 476–505.

¹¹James Flink, *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), p. 191.

Although their expenditures were innovative, auto manufacturers' advertising content lagged behind the advertising vanguard. Contemporary advertising trendsetters were to be found in two quite different sectors: high-volume producers of relatively inexpensive, brand-name consumer goods made using continuous process systems, such as soap, processed foods and drinks, cigarettes, medicines, threads, and magazines; and firms operated by individuals who set the advertising pace with what P. T. Barnum called an "instinct" for showmanship.¹² By 1910 corporations dominated most industries in the former category, operating with high degrees of managerial specialization and struggling with marketing problems that rewarded intensely innovative and aggressive advertising. As to the latter, many 19th-century owner-managers had exhibited such flair—including the automobile industry's precursors, bicycle manufacturers. Albert A. Pope, for instance, had advertised the Columbia Bicycle to world fame, commissioning dynamic images from leading commercial artists.

Despite the many links between bicycles and early automobiles, however, early automobile promoters did not look to their cycling forerunners for guidance when it came to advertising their products. Even their similar experiences with races as an important early promotional device did not translate into consumer advertising for autos. Instead, the aesthetic roots of auto advertising are to be found in the carriage industry, the automobile's other ancestor, and carriage advertising typically did not picture passengers or try to invoke sensations of speed or motion to appeal to consumers. The carriage trade origins of so many automakers explain the strength of this sedate legacy. In 1906, for instance, the George N. Pierce Company described its Pierce Great Arrow Suburban as a "dependable touring car and a luxurious city carriage."¹³ Also, flamboyant advertising had generally negative connotations for Progressive Era elites because of its associations with patent medicine salesmen and the circus.¹⁴ Certainly no early auto manufacturers permitted the enthusiasm they expressed about their cars elsewhere to creep into their promotions.

Even when copywriting specialists took on auto accounts, they clung to "reason why" strategies that closely followed either the elitist or the mechanical traditions, or continued pairing the two strate-

¹² Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum* (Chicago, 1973), pp. 22, 53–54.

¹³ Advertisement in *The World's Work* 12, no. 6 (October 1906): cover 3.

¹⁴ This speculation fits with Davis's argument that the early automobile manufacturers sacrificed business success for social ambitions.

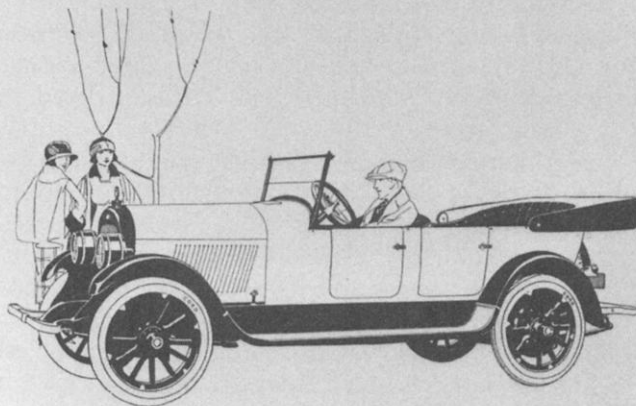
gies. Still distancing their profession from its colorful roots, they emphasized copy over illustration. Seeking legitimacy for themselves, as well as for their clients, they understood targeting by class, as Calkins's strategies for the expensive models indicate. Claude Hopkins, another automobiling enthusiast who tempered enthusiasm with convention, advised strategies specifically calculated to reassure buyers and build confidence—writing profiles about head engineers, for example, and glossing facts such as “actual figures how quantity production reduced costs,” especially for middle-class cars such as the Hudson and the Studebaker.¹⁵ In this vein, the Lexington Motor Company described its 1922 Minute Man Six as “a pre-determined product, a logical fruition of a definite program . . . [which] reflects everything which Lexington and its allied group of factories have been trying to accomplish for years” (fig. 4). Even the ad's references to a car “Built to Stay Young!” do not bring the overall message up to the consumerist standards of the decade: the car sits still while young ladies admire it and its stiffly posed driver; the reference to “self-contained manufacturing units” evinces a pride in industrial progress that hearkens back to the previous century. Such copy violated the dictum that advertisers should not feature their factories because that was not what they were selling. As Nathaniel Fowler, Jr., had observed more than twenty years earlier, the “buyer of a thing is not the maker of it; he is interested in the result, not in the steps to the result. He does not care how a thing was made . . .”¹⁶ Like Dorris, Lexington's boast of finally achieving what it had been “trying to accomplish” expressed the producers' experiences, not what they offered the consumer.

But as the auto industry developed in the 1920s, so auto advertisements began to change and change quickly. After the mid-1920s, Henry Ford was the last of the early enthusiasts still in control of a major automotive firm. His production-centered ethos unwavering, he almost drove his company to ruin by continuing to build economical machines and to advertise them as just that—and only that. De-

¹⁵Claude C. Hopkins, *My Life in Advertising*, (New York, 1927), pp. 109–21; Davis (n. 2 above), p. 91.

¹⁶Nathaniel C. Fowler, Jr., *Fowler's Publicity: An Encyclopedia of Advertising and Printing* (Boston, 1900) pp. 520–21, 654. “Good will” was the contemporary term for a positive public image and the title of one section from which these quotations came. In the 1970s and 1980s, CEOs and factories resurfaced in advertisements as American industrialists tried to rekindle consumers' confidence and pride in American-made goods. Lee Iacocca's advertisements for Chrysler and Ford's “Quality Is Job One” campaign offer interesting parallels to the 19th-century industrialists' attempts to sell and communicate confidence in uncertain conditions.

Lexington Leads Because It Lasts!



Built to Stay Young!

There is only one safe way to buy a car in 1922—

Look beyond its beauty and ask this question—

"How well preserved will its chassis be in 1925 and later?" Also—

"How well will it *maintain* its efficiency? How *lose* will the upkeep be every hour and mile of those years?"

That is the test that changed conditions have imposed upon the motor car industry. The time has come when people want to buy a car that will make them *want to keep* it because it stays young.

The new Series 'U' Lexington meets those requirements in excess of previous standards.

It is not a new emergency-model built as

a matter of expediency to meet a sudden trade condition. It is a pre-determined product, a logical fruition of a definite program—worthily achieved!

It reflects everything which Lexington and its allied group of factories have been trying to accomplish for years.

And this strictly high-grade car could not have originated in any other way except from our "factory-community" system that controls the source of supply and quality of workmanship, and *effects vast economies*.

These self-contained manufacturing units, co-ordinated as though under one roof, *protect the quality* of this car and give it the *earmarks of individuality*. Write about our dealership proposition on this new car.

Lexington Motor Company, Connersville, Indiana, U.S.A.

Subsidiary United States Automotive Corporation

Lexington
MINUTE MAN SIX

FIG. 4.—"Built to Stay Young!" Lexington Motor Company, *Motor* 37, no. 5 (April 1922): 59.

spite Ford's reticence before finally moving from the venerable Model T to the born-staid Model A, his enthusiast's joy at automobiling never faded, resurfacing with the 1932 V-8, the design of which he personally supervised. Nonetheless his advertising strategies remained the same through the early 1930s—all traces of the sheer enjoyment to be found in driving a car still missing from their focus on mechanics, operations, economy, and production. As founder of the firm and the world's most exalted industrialist, he insisted that his company's advertisements "not make the pleasure principle," no matter what else was going on in the consumer culture and no matter what son Edsel or others advised. Magazine advertisements in the 1920s showed instead the Highland Park and River Rouge plants that were Henry Ford's glory. "A Giant Who Works For You" and "Servant of the Millions" read the headlines of two advertisements that expressed the technological sublime in copy as well as image (fig. 5). With only occasional exceptions, Ford adamantly refused to allow his firm's public image to move away from his emphasis on large-scale production, standardization, and low prices until well after the company had irretrievably lost its lead to Alfred Sloan's innovative marketing and organization at General Motors.¹⁷

Ford's prolonged opposition to modern advertising strategies was rare on the national scene in the 1920s, in part because owner-managers of major production firms advertising directly to consumers were rare. His strategies were not inherently inappropriate in a young, precorporate industry, especially for products of complex technological innovation. But companies, and industries, frequently outgrow their founders' operational styles, including their marketing strategies. Examples abound, even in our newest industries, of founders creating market conditions in which they can no longer do well. Thirty and even forty years after Ferdinand Schumacher had introduced oat processing for human consumption in 1854, he fought bitterly the postincorporation strategy of selling his product with the charming Quaker Oats symbol. Ford's own hero, Thomas A. Edison, could not or would not see that movie stars and romantic stories marked the road to riches for filmmakers using his technologies; thirty years after his 1888 patent, he ended all attempts at com-

¹⁷Henry Ford, *My Life and Work* (Garden City, 1925), pp. 54–56; Allan Nevins, *Ford: Expansion and Challenge: 1915–1933* (New York, 1957), p. 264; Richard Tedlow, *New and Improved: The Story of Mass Marketing in America* (New York, 1990), ch. 3. Advertisements from the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan, Acc. 19, Adv—Ford—1923—Institutional.

A Giant Who Works For You

There is a giant who works tirelessly to lighten the labor on the American farm, to make the farm more productive, and farming more profitable.

He is personified by the vast resources of the Ford organization, whose herculean labors are directed primarily toward lowering the cost and increasing the efficiency of Ford cars, Ford Trucks, and the Fordson Tractor.

The larger this giant has grown the lower the prices of Ford products have fallen, and the more valuable they have become from the investment standpoint as farm equipment.

To the farmer this has meant lower and lower farm costs, better arrangement of farming activities, more money crops, all with less effort and therefore with greater net profit—proof enough that it is to his interest to standardize on Ford equipment.

Ford Motor Company

CARS · TRUCKS · TRACTORS

Ask Any Ford Dealer



Ford River Rouge Blast Furnaces produce nearly hundred tons of molten iron a day.



FIG. 5.—“A Giant Who Works For You,” Ford Motor Company. (From the Collections of the Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, neg. no. 64.167.19.417.)

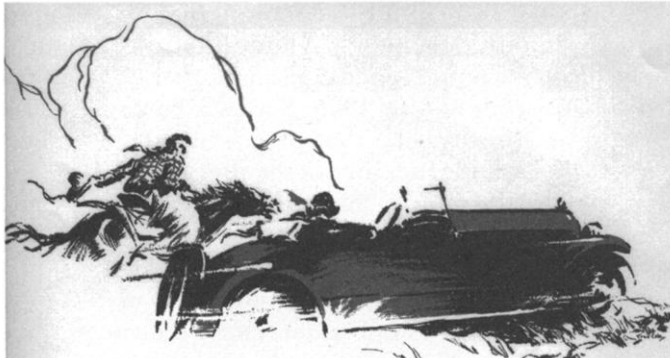
peting in the field.¹⁸ By the mid-1920s automobiling had just arrived at its thirty-year point, and only General Motors' divisions had already moved into corporate operations, and that only ten years earlier. Chrysler incorporated in 1925. Ford's adamant opposition to innovation in advertising, like that of production-oriented owner-managers before him, is a measure of the importance such entrepreneurs attached to the public images of their products and their firms.

By the middle of the 1920s, automobile marketing was no longer just a matter of convincing people to buy a car, or to buy one car over another. It was increasingly a matter of convincing people to replace their original car, even if it still functioned adequately. At this point, automotive executives moved the industry toward more seasoned marketing, prompted either by their own flair for promotion or by corporate marketing practices. Edward S. Jordan, an owner-manager, possessed a flair, or marketing intuition, that relished imagery, verbal and visual. Legend credits his inspiration to a young woman's teasing request for a car for her devil-may-care cohort. In response, Jordan redesigned the promotions for a car already in production to recreate the Playboy (fig. 6). His groundbreaking 1923 advertisements in the *Saturday Evening Post* set a new pace for the field, with dynamic images and copy about power, speed, and fun for a car purportedly designed for lively, youthful adventurers, or those who perceived themselves as such. Jordan made no mention of the model's technological innovations that enabled women to start them easily. Jordan aimed this "brawny thing—yet a graceful thing for the sweep o' the Avenue" at those who love "the cross of the wild and the tame," and "revel and romp and race."¹⁹

About this same time, Sloan brought fashion into the market. Managing a large corporation with which owners and founders no longer strongly identified, Sloan deliberately explored design and advertising for profit, rather than for the purpose of enhancing anyone's personal identity—other than the consumer's. Sloan and his specialists put together programs that explored targeting ("A car for every purse and purpose"), a purposeful marketing mix (coordi-

¹⁸Harrison John Thornton, *The History of the Quaker Oats Company* (Chicago, 1933), pp. 25–32, 87–110; W. Bernard Carlson, "Artifacts and Frames of Meaning: Thomas A. Edison, His Managers, and the Cultural Construction of Motion Pictures," in *Shaping Technology, Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnological Change*, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), pp. 175–98.

¹⁹Julian L. Watkins, *The 100 Greatest Advertisements: Who Wrote Them and What They Did* (New York, 1959), pp. 51–52.



Somewhere West of Laramie

SOMEWHERE west of Laramie there's a broncho-busting, steer-roping girl who knows what I'm talking about.

She can tell what a sassy pony, that's a cross between greased lightning and the place where it hits, can do with eleven hundred pounds of steel and action when he's going high, wide and handsome.

The truth is—the Playboy was built for her.


Built for the lass whose face is brown with the sun when the day is done of revel and romp and race.

She loves the cross of the wild and the tame.

There's a savor of links about that car—of laughter and lilt and light—a hint of old loves—and saddle and quirt. It's a brawny thing—yet a graceful thing for the sweep o' the Avenue.

Step into the Playboy when the hour grows dull with things gone dead and stale.

Then start for the land of real living with the spirit of the lass who rides, lean and rangy, into the red horizon of a Wyoming twilight.



JORDAN

JORDAN MOTOR CAR COMPANY, INC., CLEVELAND, OHIO

FIG. 6.—“Somewhere West of Laramie,” Jordan Motor Car Company, *Saturday Evening Post* (June 23, 1923). (Courtesy of the Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village.)

nated design, production, and cost aimed at specific markets), and annual model changeover for speedy obsolescence.²⁰ Combining corporate marketing conditions and operations with flair, now hired on, General Motors and then Chrysler changed the field. The Big Three's 1931 ads reflected what their managers had to say to their publics. For several years GM advertisements had already employed

²⁰David Gartman, *Auto Opium: A Social History of American Automobile Design* (London and New York, 1994), ch. 4.

March, 1931 THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN 1

THE EIGHT AS BUICK BUILDS IT



An enlarged reproduction of this picture by George Haggis, to full color, suitable for framing, will be mailed on request—free to Buick Motor Co., Flint, Michigan.

Some day your boy will own a Buick

You who have a boy, with mischief in his eye and wings upon his feet, are one of the rich men of this world, regardless of your rating in Dun or Bradstreet.

He may pester you with questions, may make more noise than a dozen boys ought to, may even mar the upholstery of your brand new automobile. But he is your boy—and all your heart is his.

Many men who drive Buicks today were boys when Buick began building automobiles twenty-seven years ago. Some lifted the hoods of their fathers' Buicks and studied that pioneer Valve-in-Head engine as boys now study Buick's Valve-in-Head Straight Eight.

They went on to fine careers . . . and Buick went along with them . . . developing, improving, refining, year after year.

The tie of friendship between these owners and Buick is very close. Some have owned as many as five, ten, even twenty Buick cars. More than eighty-eight per cent—almost nine out of ten—purchase Buicks again and again.

Buick hopes for this same friendship with your boy when he reaches man's estate, and is more than willing to pay the price in constant progress.

Buick will go forward with that boy, grow with him, seek to interpret his desires in transportation, as it interprets the desires of present-day motorists. Just as surely as Buick fulfills this responsibility, and proves worthy of his favor, some day your boy will own a Buick.

The new Buick Straight Eight, in four series and four price ranges, are offered in 30 luxurious models from \$1025 to \$2025. J. O. B. Flint, Mich.

A GENERAL MOTORS VALUE

BOOBY BY FISHER



WHEN BETTER AUTOMOBILES ARE BUILT, BUICK WILL BUILD THEM

FIG. 7.—“Some day your boy will own a Buick,” Buick, *Country Gentleman* 101, no. 3 (March 1931): 1.

psychological appeals that ranged from offering women freedom through easy driving to telling fathers that “Some day your boy will own a Buick” (fig. 7). Evocative copy promised that Buick would “go forward with that boy, *grow* with him, seek to interpret his desires in transportation, as it interprets the desires of present-day motorists.” Plymouth offered speed, portraying a businessman joyfully

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DODGE DEPENDABILITY
CHRYSLER PERFORMANCE
DE SOTO SMARTNESS



Plymouth Convertible Coupe, \$535

\$535 AND UP
 F. O. B.
 FACTORY

Naturally . . . IT'S A GREAT CAR
WITH ALL THIS GREATNESS BEHIND IT

ENGINEERED and built side by side with fine cars, Plymouth naturally is a fine car, too . . . It is perfectly logical for Plymouth to partake of Chrysler *speed and performance* . . . It is only to be expected that Dodge influence should make Plymouth a *dependable* car . . . Natural, too, that DeSoto's contribution should be *daunting smartness* . . . Built the way it is, Plymouth cannot help being the car it is. That it should offer more in quality and value is the most natural thing in the world.

Plymouth is the Only Lowest-Priced Car with Hydraulic 4-Wheel Brakes

Because hydraulic brakes are always equalized and are quick, smooth and positive in action, they are the safest brakes known. Plymouth's hydraulic brakes are over-size, with a high ratio of braking surface to car weight. They are *easier* to operate. They are extremely simple in construction, with no rods, joints or pins to rattle or squeak and get out of adjustment. They never require oiling. They are completely enclosed and work uniformly in all weather, even in the heaviest down-pour.

Modeler \$115 - Coupe \$155 - Sedan (2-door) \$165 - Sport Roadster \$165
 Sedan (4-door, 3-seater) \$175 - Coupe (with rumble seat) \$175
 Sport Roadster \$185 - Convertible Coupe \$195 - All prices f.o.b. factory
 WIRE WHEELS OPTIONAL AT NO EXTRA COST

PLYMOUTH
 SOLD AND SERVICED BY CHRYSLER, DODGE AND DESOTO DEALERS

FIG. 8.—“Naturally . . . It’s A Great Car With All This Greatness Behind It,” Plymouth, *Country Gentleman* 101, no. 3 (March 1931): 116.

speeding down the road in “A Great Car” that combined “Dodge dependability” with “Chrysler performance” and “DeSoto smartness” (fig. 8). Ford, still under its founder’s firm control, replaced his factories with Greenfield Village and put “The New Ford [which] is an economical car to own and drive” into a nostalgic setting that reflected the patriarch’s new passion (fig. 9).

THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN March, 1931

The New Ford is an economical car to own and drive



THE NEW FORD DE LUXE COUPE

LOW FIRST COST, LOW COST OF OPERATION AND UP-KEEP, AND LOW YEARLY DEPRECIATION MEAN A DISTINCT SAVING TO EVERY PURCHASER

The new Ford is a splendid car to own and drive because of its attractive lines and colors, safety, comfort, speed, reliability and long life.

There are, in addition, three other features of importance to every far-seeing automobile owner . . . low first cost, low cost of operation and upkeep, and low yearly depreciation.

During the life of the car, the day-by-day economy of owning a Ford will amount to considerably more than the saving on the first cost. You save when you purchase the new Ford and you save every mile you drive.



Evidence of the economy of the new Ford is shown in its selection by large industrial companies which keep accurate cost records. Many of these operate fleets of fifty, one hundred and two hundred Ford cars and trucks. One company has eight thousand. The experience of these careful buyers is a dependable guide for you to follow in the purchase of a motor car. The reasons for the good performance and

economy of the new Ford are simplicity of design, high quality of materials and care in manufacturing and assembling. Many vital parts are made to limits of one one-thousandth of an inch. Some to three ten-thousandths of an inch.

The more you see of the new Ford—the more you talk to Ford owners—the more certain you become of this fact. . . . It brings you everything you want or need in a motor car at an unusually low price. You may purchase it on convenient, economical terms through the Authorized Ford Finance Plans of the Universal Credit Company.

FIG. 9.—“The New Ford is an economical car to own and drive,” Ford Motor Company, *Country Gentleman* 101, no. 3 (March 1931): 62.

From our perspective at the other end of the century, it seems anomalous that the automobile industry should have dragged its heels so in promoting what we now buy—whether we care to admit it or not—as dream machines and components of our personalities. This anomaly seems especially salient because automobiles dominate both popular and scholarly memories of the 1920s, and the decade’s marketing specialists left a forceful legacy in their tools of

persuasion. Jordan's novel invitation to step "into the Playboy when the hour grows dull with things gone dead and stale" echoes the Roaring Twenties of legend, and automobile ads ever since.²¹ *Judicious Advertising's* 1903 critique had been premature, holding the infant auto industry to a standard of advertising liveliness it could only meet after the field itself no longer resembled "a kaleidoscope," in Hopkins's phrase.²² As American culture assimilated automobility, the 1920s became the transition decade for the automobile industry, during which corporate operations increasingly distanced themselves from owners and founders, and their advertising followed suit. Ford's exception to that trend only proved the rule.

²¹Watkins, p. 51.

²²Hopkins (n. 15 above), p. 110.

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Servant of the Millions



FOUNDED on the principle that a business earns the right to exist only as it serves, the Ford organization has grown to be more than a business. It is an institution that serves its millions.

Through 29,000 service stations in America its stewardship reaches out to every one of the Ford Cars, Ford Trucks and Fordson Tractors on every street, highway and farm the length and breadth of the land.

The nearest service to every farm is Ford service—a very potent reason for standardizing on Ford equipment.

Ford Motor Company
CARS · TRUCKS · TRACTORS

Ask Any Ford Dealer



Part of Woodward Avenue frontage of the mammoth Highland Park plant of the Ford Motor Company, largest Automobile factory in the world.

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